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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SHENYANG 000161

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/K, EAP/CM, INR
MOSCOW PASS TO VLADIVOSTOK

E.O. 12958: DECL: TEN YEARS AFTER KOREAN UNIFICATION
TAGS: CH ECON KN KS PGOV PREL
SUBJECT: DPRK CHARM IN NE CHINA: WE THINK WE WANT TO TRUST
YOU

REF: SEOUL 1387

Classified By: Consul General Stephen B. Wickman. Reasons 1.4(b)/(d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: A Shenyang-based DPRK diplomat sought out a Korean-speaking Shenyang ConGenOff at social events on the margins of two Chinese-sponsored trade fairs to make three points: 1) the "political winds" in Pyongyang are changing, and DPRK leader Kim Jong-il desires close ties and friendship with the United States; 2) the Six-Party Talks are no longer viable and should be scuttled; and 3) Kim Jong-il would be ready to denuclearize in the event of U.S.-DPRK normalization and improved ties. The North Korean Consul General, meanwhile, has been uncharacteristically friendly and direct in his engagement with the Consul General, departing from his normal practice of communicating only in Chinese. The North Korean diplomats may be acting on new instructions, and we note that their line is very similar to that used by Kim Jong-il with the Hyundai Asan Chairwoman (reftel). END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

¶2. (C) Consul General and ConGenOffs traveled to northeast China's Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture August 26-31 to participate in a local trade fair and later to Changchun September 1-3 to participate in a regional trade fair. DPRK Consul General Ri Ki-bom and cultural affairs consul Jang Kyong-il attended the same trade events. Both North Korean diplomats took advantage of the Chinese seating the U.S. and DPRK groups together at several representational events to communicate with us more directly and easily than ever before in Post memory. Consul General Ri joked expansively with his Sino-Korean hosts and, uncharacteristically, engaged in prolonged Korean banter with the Consul General (previously Ri has clearly preferred to communicate in Chinese). Consul Jang was explicit in showing a desire to improve relations with the United States, speaking extensively in Korean to ConGenOff on several occasions.

DPRK TO USG: WE THINK WE WANT TO TRUST YOU

¶3. (C) Over the course of several days, Jang Kyong-il, who arrived a few months ago from Pyongyang, consistently reiterated to ConGenOff that the "political winds" in Pyongyang were changing and that Kim Jong-il and the North Korean people wanted closer ties with the United States. Claiming that the North Korean government was increasingly nervous about the growing influence that China had over its affairs, Jang said that the North

Korean government wanted to improve relations with the United States. He said the Korean War had occurred more than 60 years ago and that "bygones were bygones," concluding that today it was in the North Korean government's best interest to improve relations with the United States.

SIX-PARTY TALKS ARE NO LONGER AN OPTION

¶4. (C) The consul said that the Six-Party Talks were a non-functioning, ineffectual tool and should be disbanded, complaining that it was a forum for other groups, namely the Japanese, to pressure the North Koreans on issues separate from the immediate tasks at hand -- U.S.-DPRK normalization and denuclearization. He said that Kim Jong-il wanted peace and, in particular, peace and friendship with the United States. The competing interests of Japan, South Korea, and China had made said peace difficult to achieve. Jang said that he believed China would be dead set against U.S.-DPRK normalization because China enjoyed using the leverage of the Six-Party Talks and geography to squeeze North Korea.

DPRK READY TO DENUCLEARIZE: IS THE USG READY TO NORMALIZE?

¶5. (C) In addressing the possibility of denuclearization in the event of U.S.-DPRK normalization, Jang said he thought Kim Jong-il would be more than willing to denuclearize in the event of improved U.S.-DPRK ties and assurances of non-aggression, with the caveat that this was his personal opinion. He said that North Korea would never preemptively

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use nuclear weapons against another nation and that the DPRK's nuclear program was purely for self-defense. As for the non-aggression assurances, the consul said that the DPRK truly feared the USG's military capabilities, citing Iraq and Afghanistan as showcases of rapid-response American military might. The consul opined that if the United States and DPRK were able to improve cultural, economic and political ties, the North Korean government would realize that a non-aggression assurance was superfluous and back off.

¶6. (C) Jang saw the fundamental roadblock in U.S.-DPRK relations to be a lack of trust. He said that the DPRK thought in 2000 that everything was set for a thaw in relations, but after the inauguration of President Bush, everything the North Koreans expected had been turned upside-down. He saw Iraq and Afghanistan as examples of how the fast-moving and unpredictable American political scene was capable of changing at a moment's notice. Jang added, however, that the DPRK appreciated working with trusted State Department interlocutors who have engaged them over the past couple of years.

DPRK ECONOMY: IMPROVED, BUT STILL CONCERNS

¶7. (C) When asked about the economic situation in North Korea this summer and the "150-Day Battle," Jang averred that electricity was in abundance and no longer being rationed. However, as for the prospects of the upcoming harvest, he looked away and said "General Kim Jong-il takes care of everything, so one hopes the harvest should be enough, right?"

WICKMAN